

Minneapolis Institute of Art

Mapping Black Identities

G373, G374

February 21, 2019 – March 15, 2020

Mia

Mapping Black Identities

“What informs black artists’ works is the black experience, which is global.”

-Frank Bowling, 1969

This exhibition champions the voices and experiences of Black artists from the United States, Africa and its diaspora. Taking inspiration from the recent acquisition of artist Frank Bowling’s map painting *False Start* (1970), the work in this and the adjoining gallery challenge the Western notion that Black identity is monolithic. The works on view evoke a multiplicity of Black identities through an intersectional conversation that takes into account race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and more.

Mapping is a colonial practice directly tied to painful histories of conquest and domination over both lands and people. It also reflects the desire to represent something that is larger than oneself and give recognizable form to the world. In this exhibition mapping functions as a powerful way to reclaim spaces of systemic White Supremacy —such as the museum— that have traditionally excluded or overlooked work by Black artists. By foregrounding personal, historical, formal, and conceptual discussion by artists in their own words, *Mapping Black Identities* seeks to amplify underrepresented voices and create connections around the concept of Blackness across time and place.

This exhibition is co-curated by Mia’s Contemporary Art Department, including Esther Callahan, Curatorial Affairs Fellow; Gabriel Ritter, Curator and Department Head; Nicole Soukup, Assistant Curator; and Keisha Williams, Curatorial Department Assistant and Artist Liaison.

Glossary

The **African diaspora** consists of the worldwide collection of communities descended from Africa's peoples, predominantly in the Americas and Europe. Historically, ethnographers, historians, politicians and writers have used the term particularly to refer to the descendants of the West and Central Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Americas via the Atlantic slave trade between the 16th and 19th centuries, with their largest populations in Brazil, the United States and Haiti.

Mapping:

1. Literal: the act or process of making a map.
2. Conceptual: broadly defined as the act or process of charting, exploring, or defining. Here, mapping may refer to giving recognizable shape or form or structure to abstract concepts, such as identity. In this way, mapping can be reinterpreted as layered, complex, intersectional, and deeply personal.

White Supremacy is an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.



Frank Bowling (b. 1934, Guyanese)
False Start, 1970
The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 2018.56



“What distinguishes or creates the uniqueness of the black artist is not only the color of his skin, but the experiences he brings to his art that forge, inform, and feed it and link him essentially to the rest of the black people.”

-Frank Bowling



Frank Bowling, Guyanese, born 1934

Middle Passage, 1970

Synthetic polymer paint, silkscreen ink, spray paint, wax crayon, and graphite on canvas
122 ¼ × 122 ¼ × 2 in. (310.5 × 310.5 × 5.1 cm)

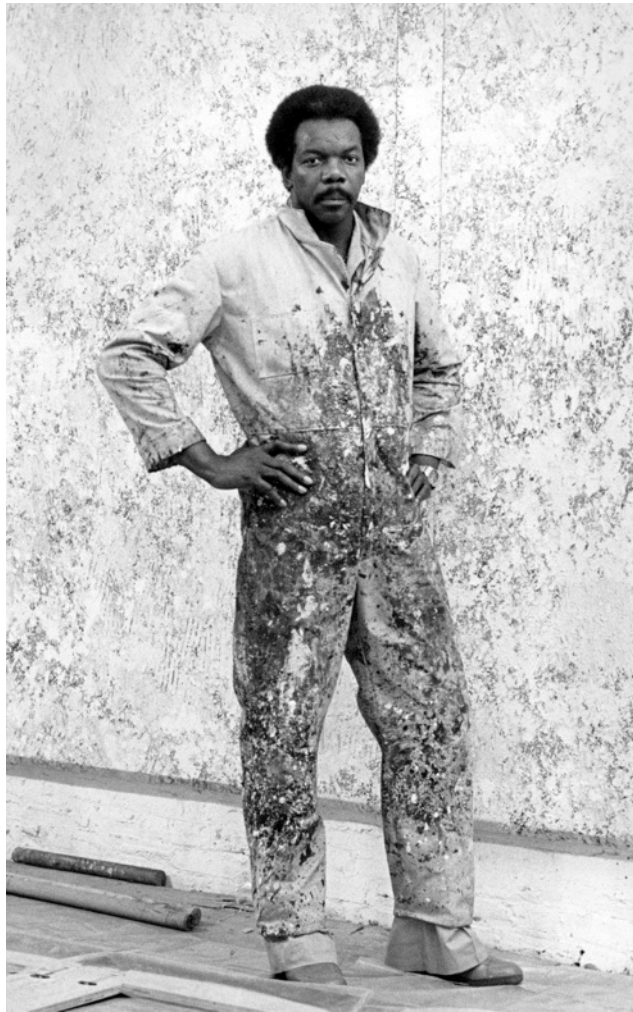
Painting

1970-145 DJ

© Frank Bowling / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London



Sam Gilliam (b. 1933, American)
Carousel Merge, 1971
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of Walker Art Center



“I think there has to be a black art because there is a white art...Being black is a very important point of tension and self-discovery. To have a sense of self-acceptance we blacks have to throw off the dichotomy that has been forced on us by the white experience.”
(1973, Art News)

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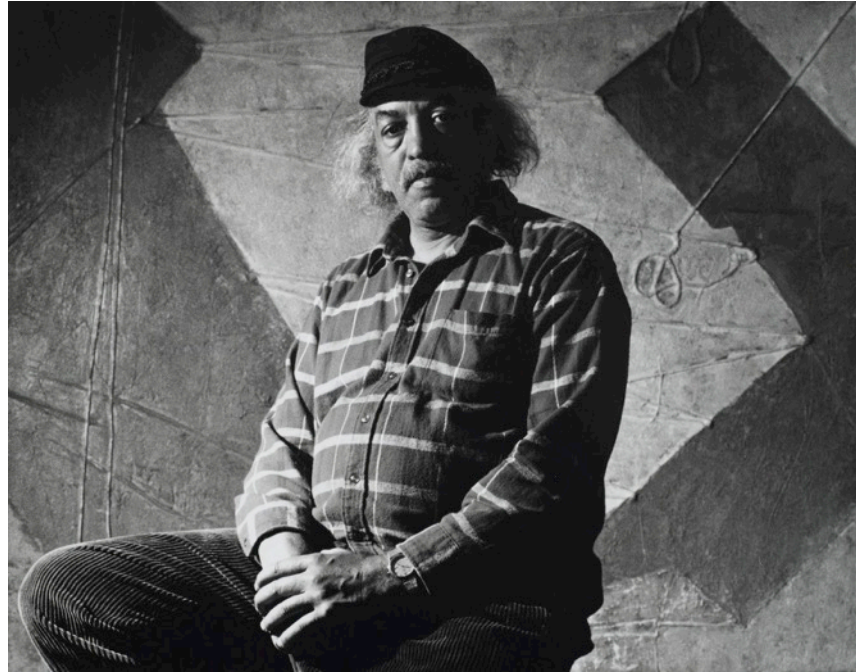
Sam Gilliam
Untitled, 1971
watercolor, acrylic and metallic paint
36 x 25 in.



Joe Overstreet (b. 1933, American)
Evolution, 1970
Acrylic on canvas with metal grommets and cotton rope



Joe Overstreet
Power Flight (1971)



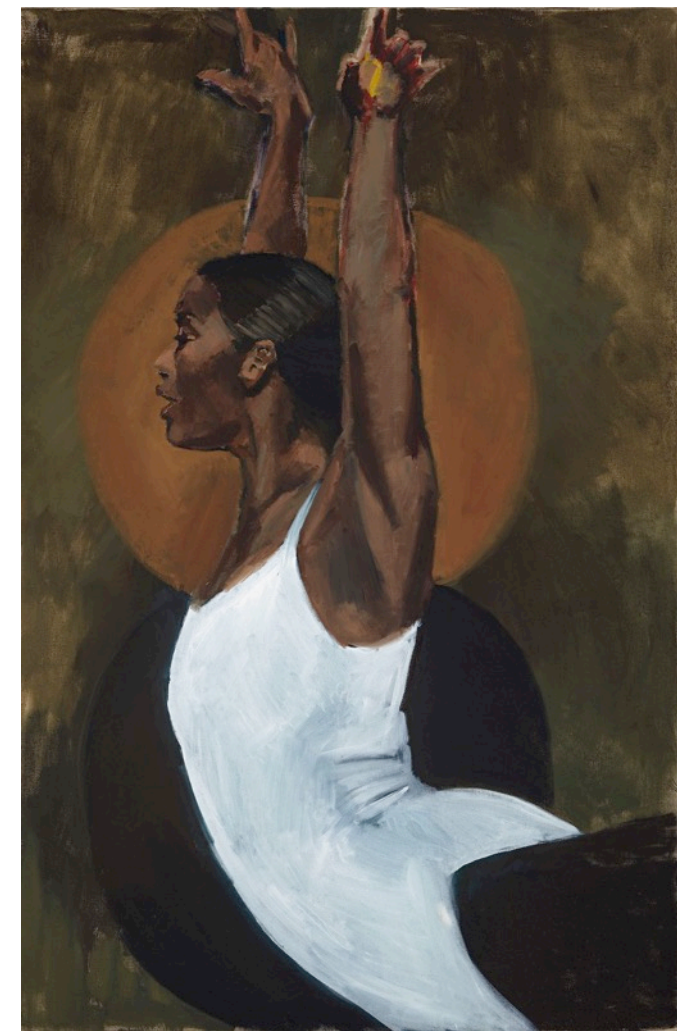
“I want my paintings to have an eye-catching ‘melody’ to them—where the viewer can see patterns with changes in color, design and space. When the viewer is away from the paintings, they will get flashes of the painting that linger in the mind like that of a tune or melody of a song that catches up on people’s ear and mind.” –Joe Overstreet, 2009



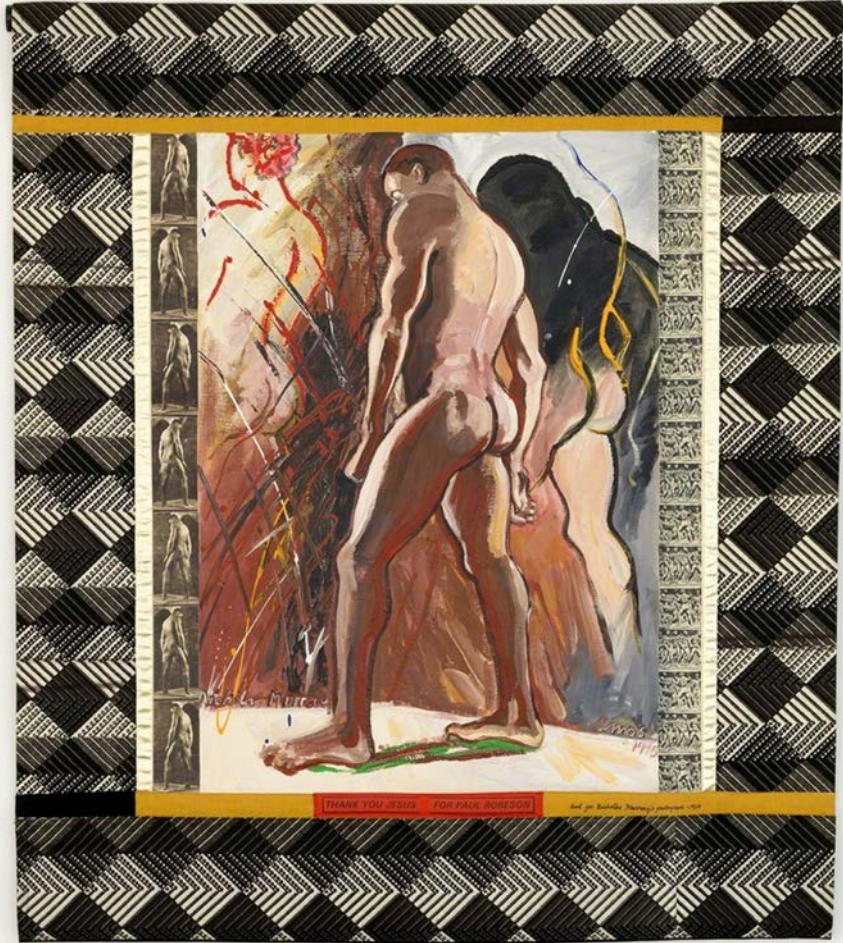
Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (b. 1977, British)
Shelves for Dynamite, 2018
Oil on linen



“Maybe I think more about black thought than black bodies. When people ask about the aspect of race in the work, they are looking for very simple or easy answers. Part of it is when you think other people are so different than yourself, you imagine that their thoughts aren’t the same. When I think about thought, I think about how much there is that is common.” (Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, 2017)



Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
Light Of The Lit Wick, 2017



Emma Amos (b. 1937, American)
Thank You Jesus for Paul Robeson (and for Nicholas Murray's Photograph - 1926), 1995
Acrylic on linen with African fabric borders and photo transfer



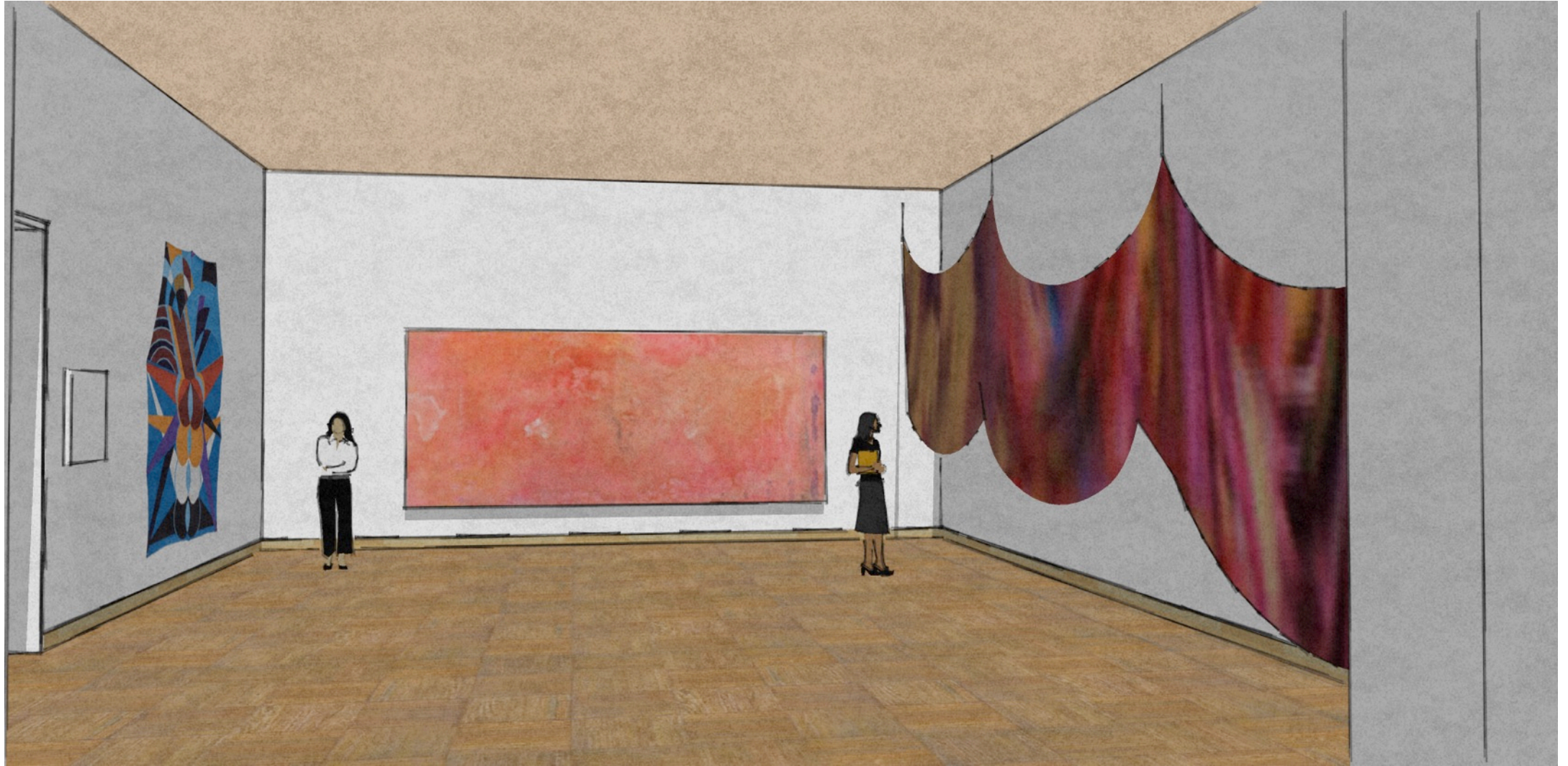
“For me, a black woman artist, to walk into the studio, is a political act.”

-Emma Amos

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Emma Amos
Black Dog Blues, 1983



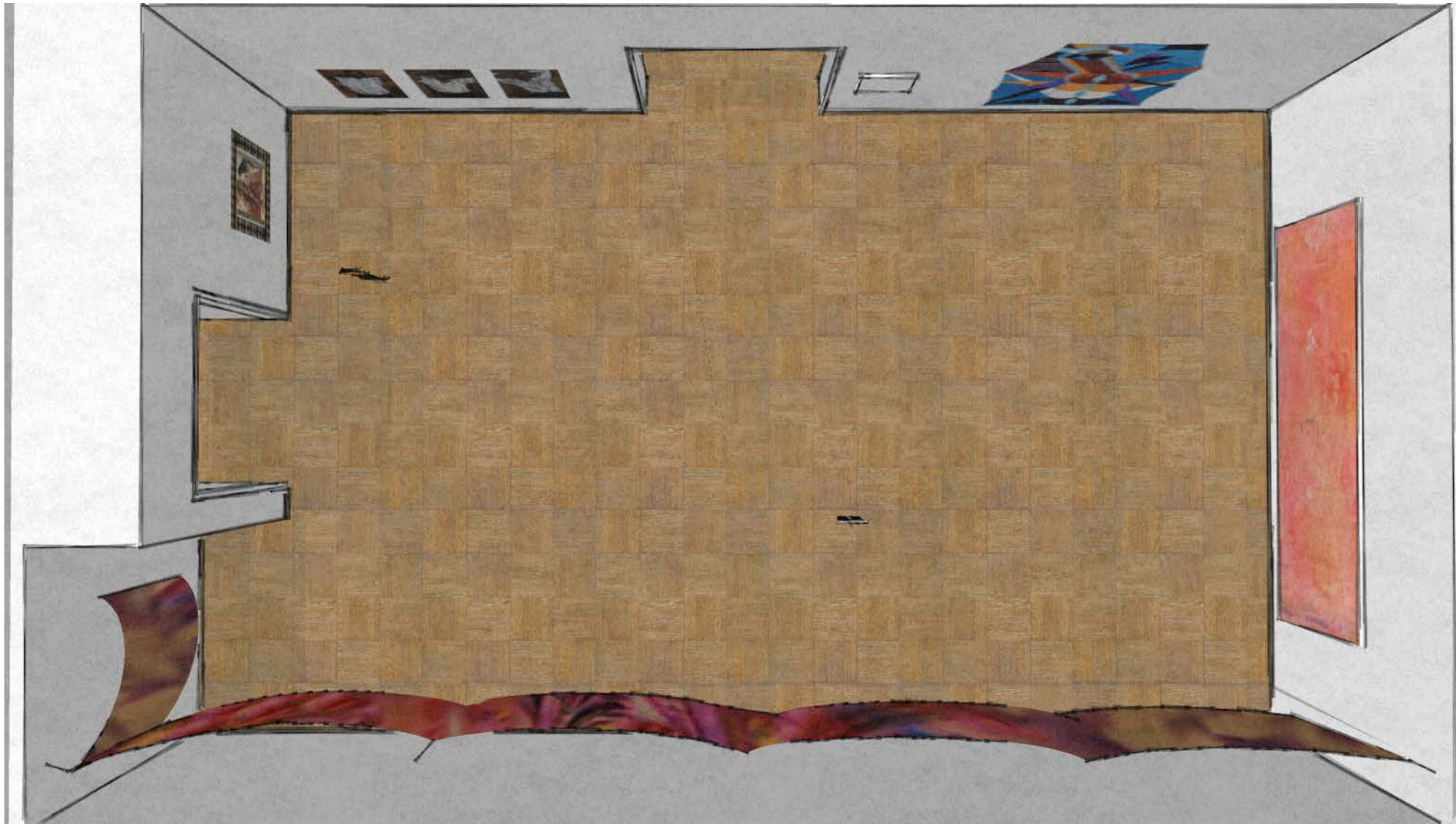
Gallery G373



Gallery G373



Gallery G373



Gallery G373



Delita Martin (b. 1972, American)
Between Sisters, 2018
Gift of funds from Lucy Mitchell, Julie Steiner, and Kaywin Feldman
and Jim Lutz
Acrylic, charcoal, colored pencil, decorative papers, hand stitching



Delita Martin (b. 1972, American)
The Soaring Hour (Self Portrait), 2018
Gift of funds from Barbara Longfellow
Acrylic, charcoal, colored pencil, decorative papers, hand stitching



“In this work, I am also exploring the different signs and symbols that help define the space the women reside in...This body of work transitions the women and their place of residence into a spiritual realm, where the symbolism is less defined, the shapes are more organic, and the icons are left for the viewer to ponder and creating a space for the women to be birthed into.”

-Delita Martin, 2018

Delita Martin
The Dinner Table, 2018
Installation at Art League Houston



Todd Gray (b. 1954, American)
Akwidaa: Phase Patterns, Unit Structures, 2018
Four archival pigment prints in artist's frames and found frames with UV laminate



Todd Gray
Flora Africanus (DC), 2018



“The term is called ‘mental colonialism,’ and it’s the idea is that the colonizers, they ban your language, they tell you your culture is worthless, and basically stir up racial self-hatred, and a desire to be white...That’s when I realized, Michael Jackson isn’t an eccentric—he’s a product of white supremacist thinking and American systemic racism. That’s when my whole thought, and my whole relationship with Michael changed, and when I decided to use his photographs to criticize whiteness, to criticize systemic racism.” (Todd Gray, 2018)



Igshaan Adams (b. 1982, South African)
I was a hidden treasure, then I wanted to be known..., 2016
Fabric, fabric paint, metal, beads, rope and tassels
Gift of funds from Mary and Bob Mersky, 2018.57



“Initially I grappled with deconstructing my hybrid identity, focusing on my multicultural, religious and sexual identities in relation to the domestic and political environments in which they were formed, hoping to understanding the conflict I was experiencing. My focus has since shifted to wanting to know more about the self from a multidimensional, universal and mystical position.”

-Igshaan Adams, 2017



Igshaan Adams
The path of the upright, 2017



Cinga Samson (b. 1986, South African)
Ivory (vi), 2018
Oil on canvas



"I wanted to present a man in his beauty as a young man, feeling exotic, even a bit desirable, complex, strange, weird, unusual...Beauty and mystery were the feelings I wanted the man to have, but in the centre the intention is that this is a young man desirable in his own sense."

-Cinga Samson, 2017



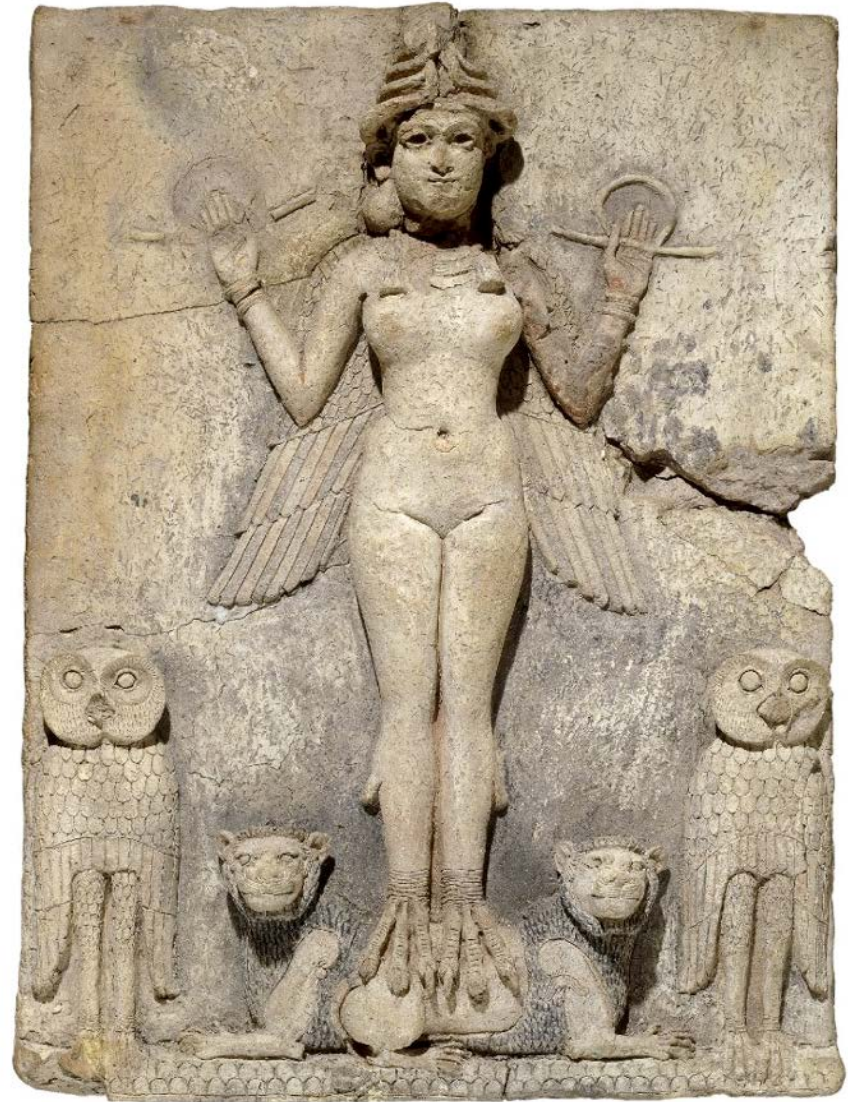
Cinga Samson
Ivory (iv), 2018
Oil on canvas, 119 x 94 x 5cm



Kevin Beasley (b. 1985, American)

Queen of the Night, 2018

Housedresses, kaftans, du-rags, t-shirts, CD's, guinea fowl feathers, clothes pins, hair rollers, hair extensions (tumbleweave), fake gold dookie chain, resin



Burney relief / Queen of the Night

19thC BC - 18thC BC, Babylonia

British Museum



“Each item has some personal connection to me. It’s really important that an object comes from me or at least someone close to me. I have some story of where everything came from and why. That’s the starting point, and the work sort of opens up from there.”

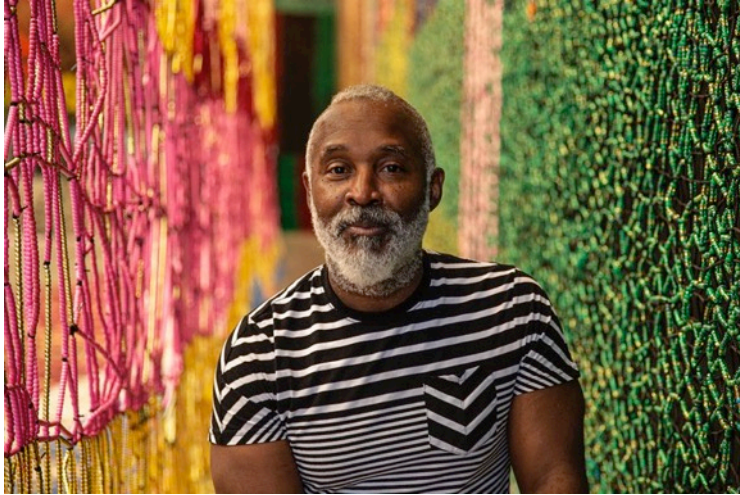
-Kevin Beasley, 2014



Kevin Beasley
Chair of the Ministers of Defense, 2016



Nick Cave(b. 1959, American)
Soundsuit, 2010
Metal, wood, plastic, pigments, cotton and acrylic fibers
Gift of funds from Alida Messinger, 2011.12a,b



"I don't ever see the *Soundsuits* as fun. They really are coming from a very dark place. The *Soundsuits* hide gender, race, class. And they force you to look at the work without judgment. You know, we tend to want to categorize everything. We tend to want to find it's place. How do we, sort of, be one to one with something that is unfamiliar?"

-Nick Cave, 2016



Kwame Brathwaite
Grandassa model on car during Garvey
Day celebration, Harlem, ca. 1968

“With photography as my medium of choice, I became an artist-activist...Black Is Beautiful was my directive. It was a time when people were protesting injustices related to race, class, and human rights around the globe. I focused on perfecting my craft so that I could use my gift to inspire thought, relay ideas, and tell stories of our struggle, our work, our liberation.”

–Kwame Brathwaite, 2018

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Kwame Brathwaite
Sikolo Brathwaite wearing a headpiece designed by Carolee
Prince, AJASS, Harlem, 1968



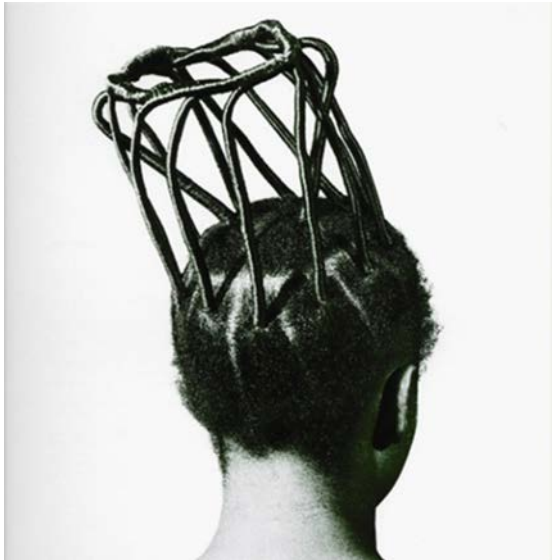
Elizabeth Catlett (1915-2012, American and Mexican)
Black is Beautiful, 1968
Lithograph on cream paper



Elizabeth Catlett
Sharecropper, 1952 (printed c. 1952-57)

“My purpose is to present black people in their beauty and dignity for ourselves and others to understand and enjoy, and to exhibit my work where black people can visit and find art to which they can relate.”

-Elizabeth Catlett



J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere (1930-2014, Nigerian)

Onile Gorgoro Or Akaba, 1975

Pineapple, 1973

Shangalti, 1971

Mkpuk Eba, HD694/74, 1974

Gelatin silver print

The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund

The Linda and Lawrence Perlman Photography Endowment

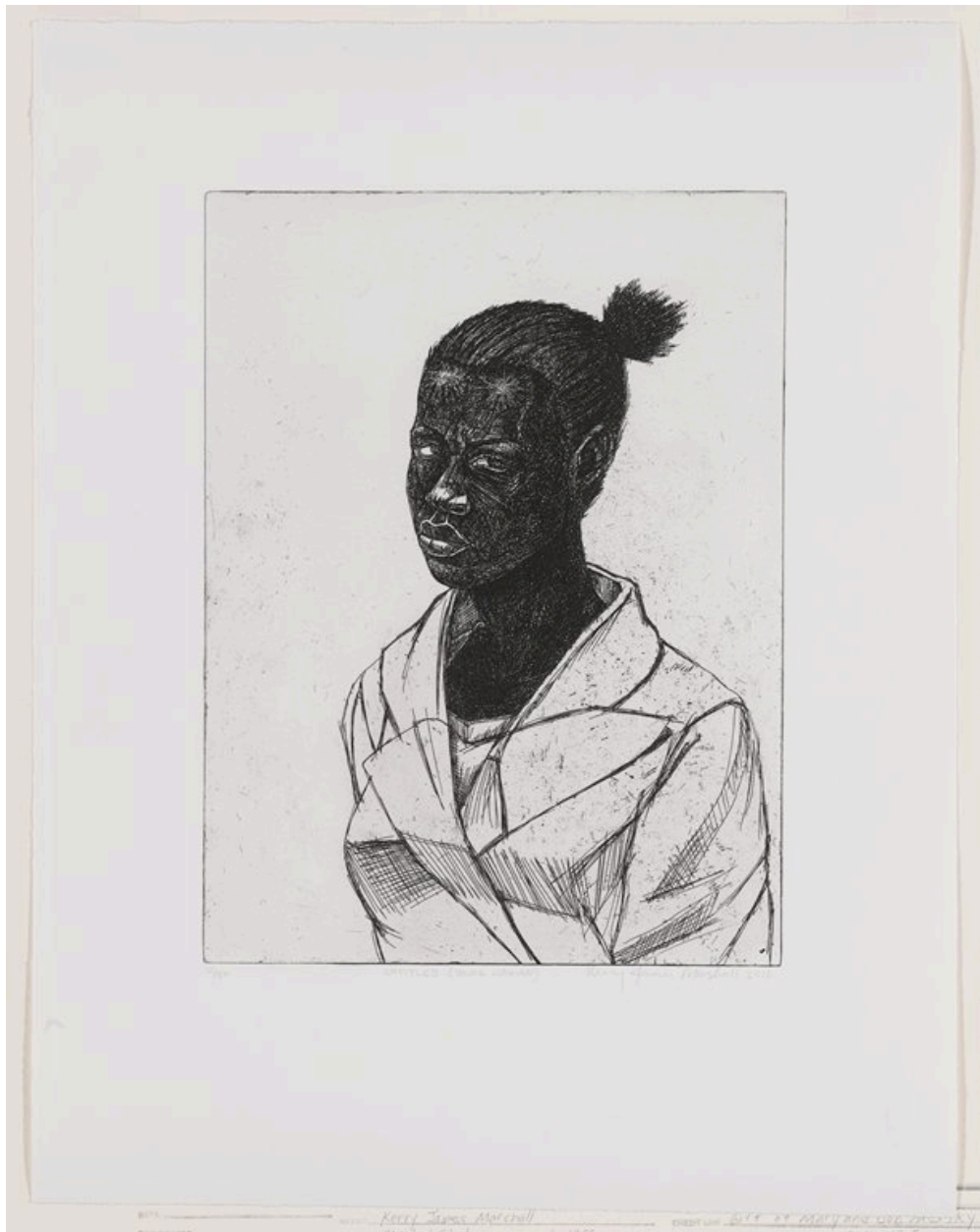
The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund

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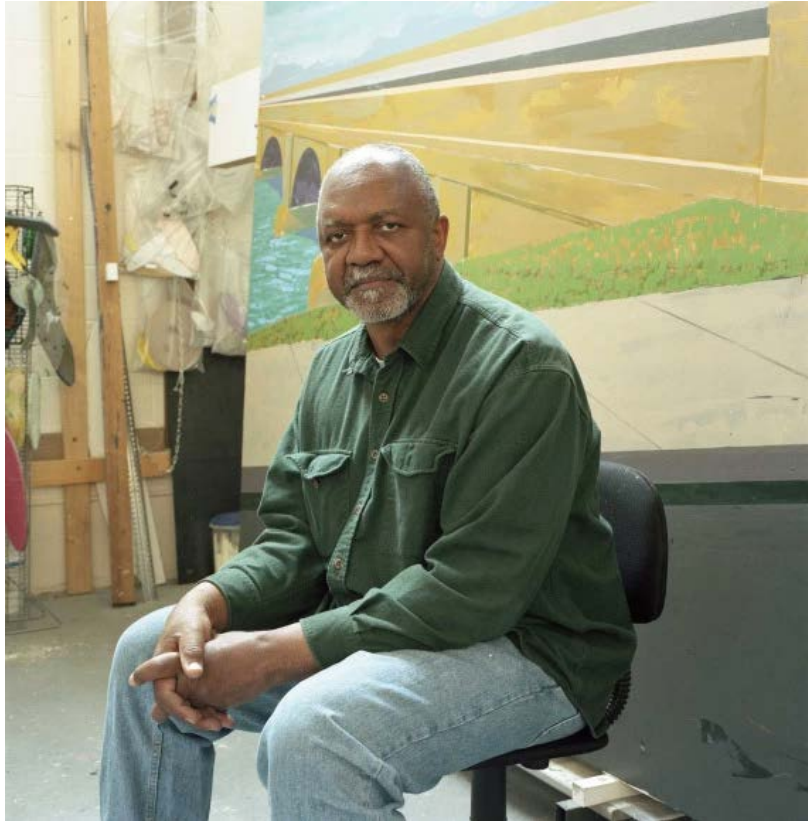


“All these hairstyles are ephemeral. I want my photographs to be noteworthy traces of them. I always wanted to record moments of beauty, moments of knowledge. Art is life. Without art, life would be frozen.”

-J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere



Kerry James Marshall (b. 1955, American)
Untitled (Young Woman), 2010
Hard-ground etchings with aquatint on Somerset White paper
Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky, 2016.110.5



“Like everybody else, I only know what art is because people who wrote art history books and who put pictures in museums told me that’s what it was supposed to be. And when I wasn’t seeing a lot of pictures of black folks in those paintings that everybody was supposed to be looking at, that was a problem for me. And resolving that problem became a paramount objective.”

-Kerry James Marshall



Kerry James Marshall
Untitled (Club Couple), 2014



Deana Lawson (b. 1979, American)
Eternity, 2017
Edition 4 of 4
Pigment Print



Deana Lawson
Brother and Sister Soweto, 2017



“With a history of certain voices not being included in the history of art, I think it is time to claim that space, to have bodies who might not have been celebrated within the institution. It is important for someone—if I was 16 years old and I was to go to a museum and see Kerry James Marshall, that would have influenced profoundly in my whole identity. So it becomes about gaining a wider audience and if that means through an institution, by all means I welcome that.”

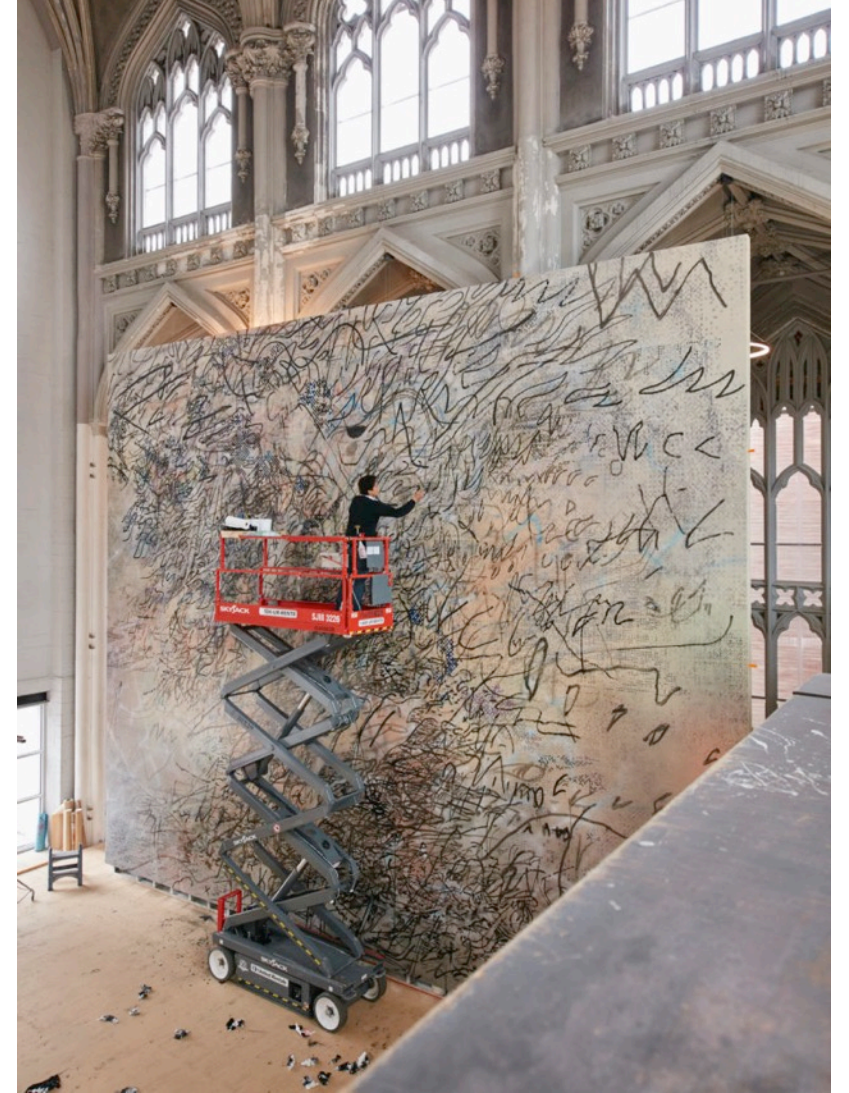
-Deana Lawson, TIME, Mar. 02, 2017



Julie Mehretu (b. 1970, American born Ethiopian)
Entropia (review), 2004
Color screenprint and lithograph
The Richard Lewis Hillstrom Fund, 2004.185



Julie Mehretu
HOWL, eon (I, II)
Installation at SF MOMA

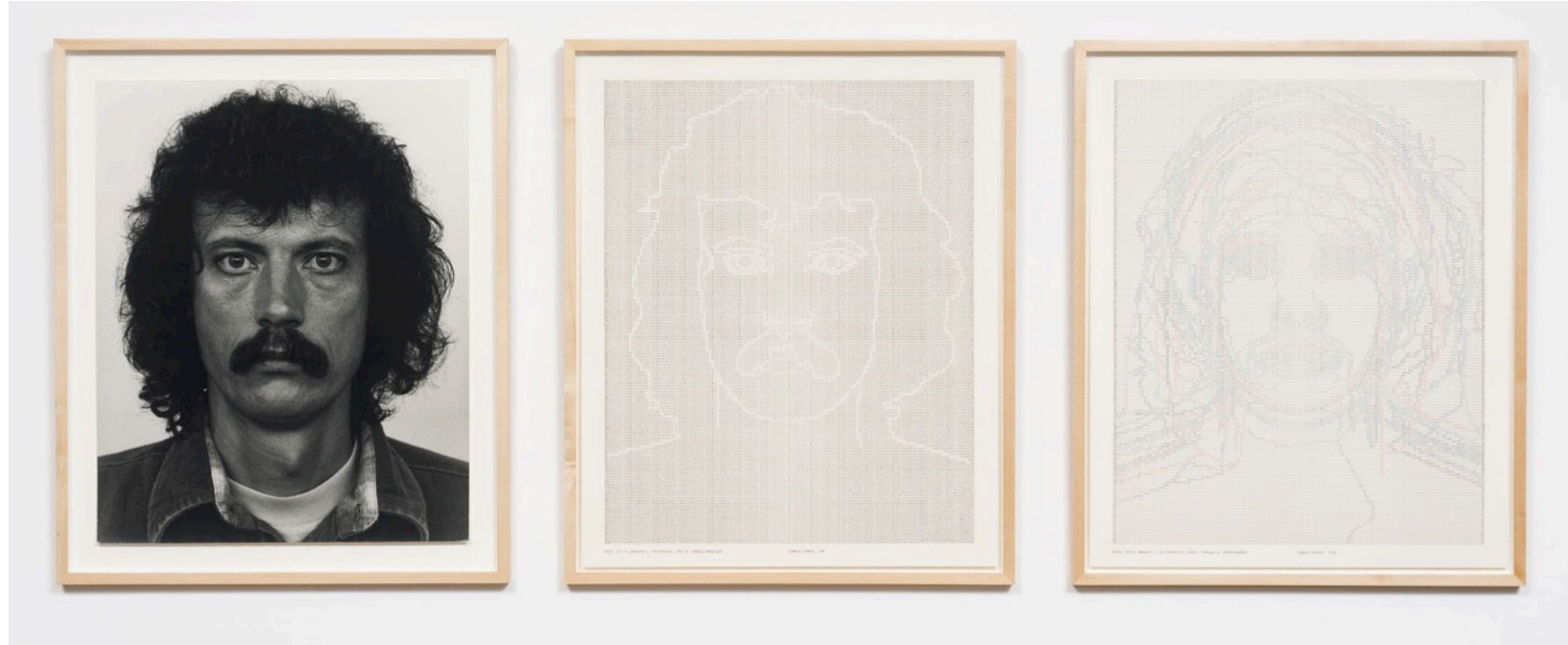


“I don’t think it’s possible for me, in general, to ever think about the American landscape without thinking about the colonial history—and colonial violence—of that narrative. The abolitionist movement. The Civil War. The move towards emancipation. All of these social dynamics that are part of that narrative, we don’t really talk about in regards to American landscape paintings. So, what does it mean to paint a landscape and be an artist in this political moment?”

-Julie Mehretu, 2017



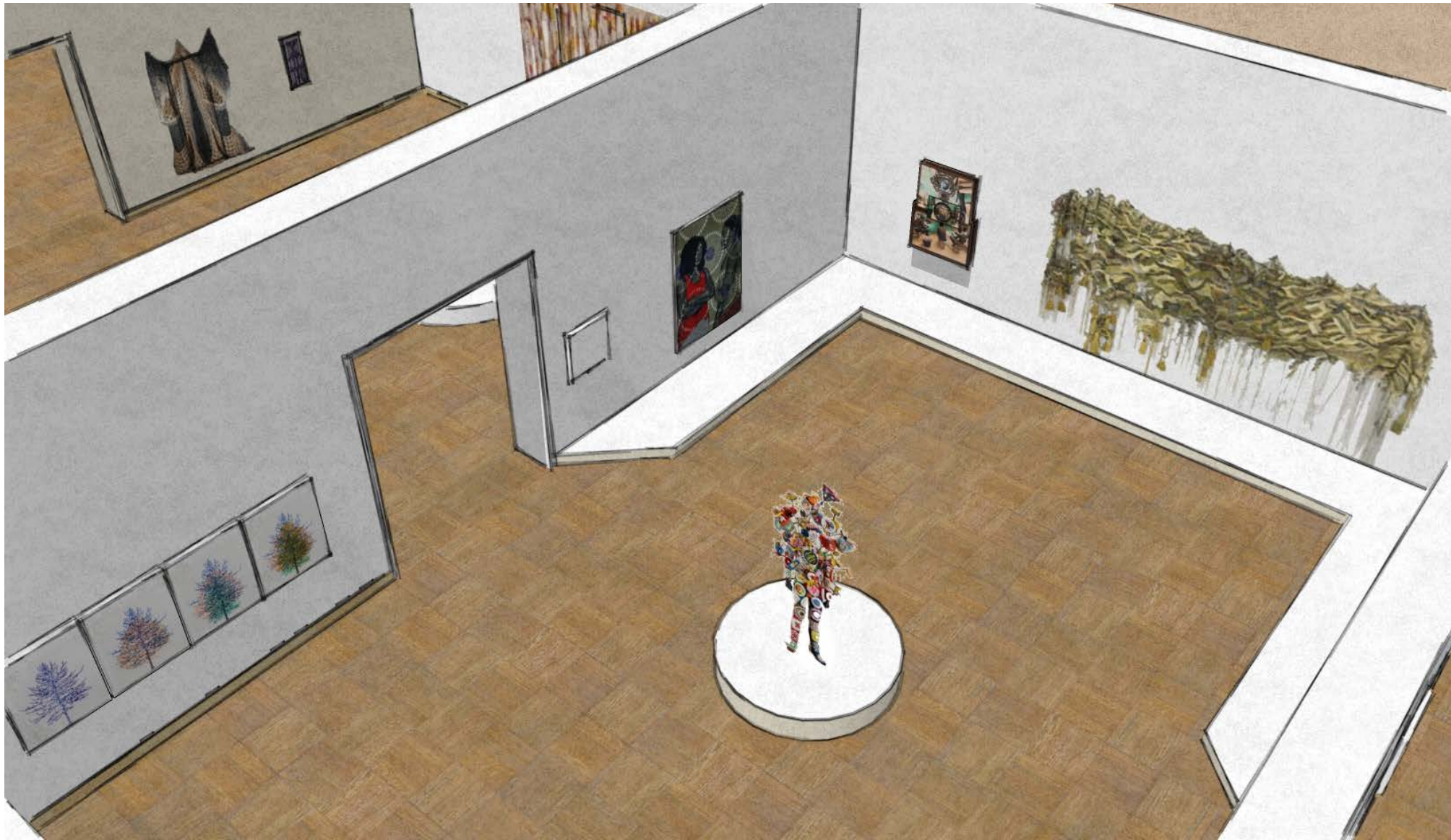
Charles Gaines (b. 1944, American)
Numbers and Trees, Tiergarten Series 3 (April, May, July, September), 2018
Color aquatint and spitbite aquatint with printed acrylic box



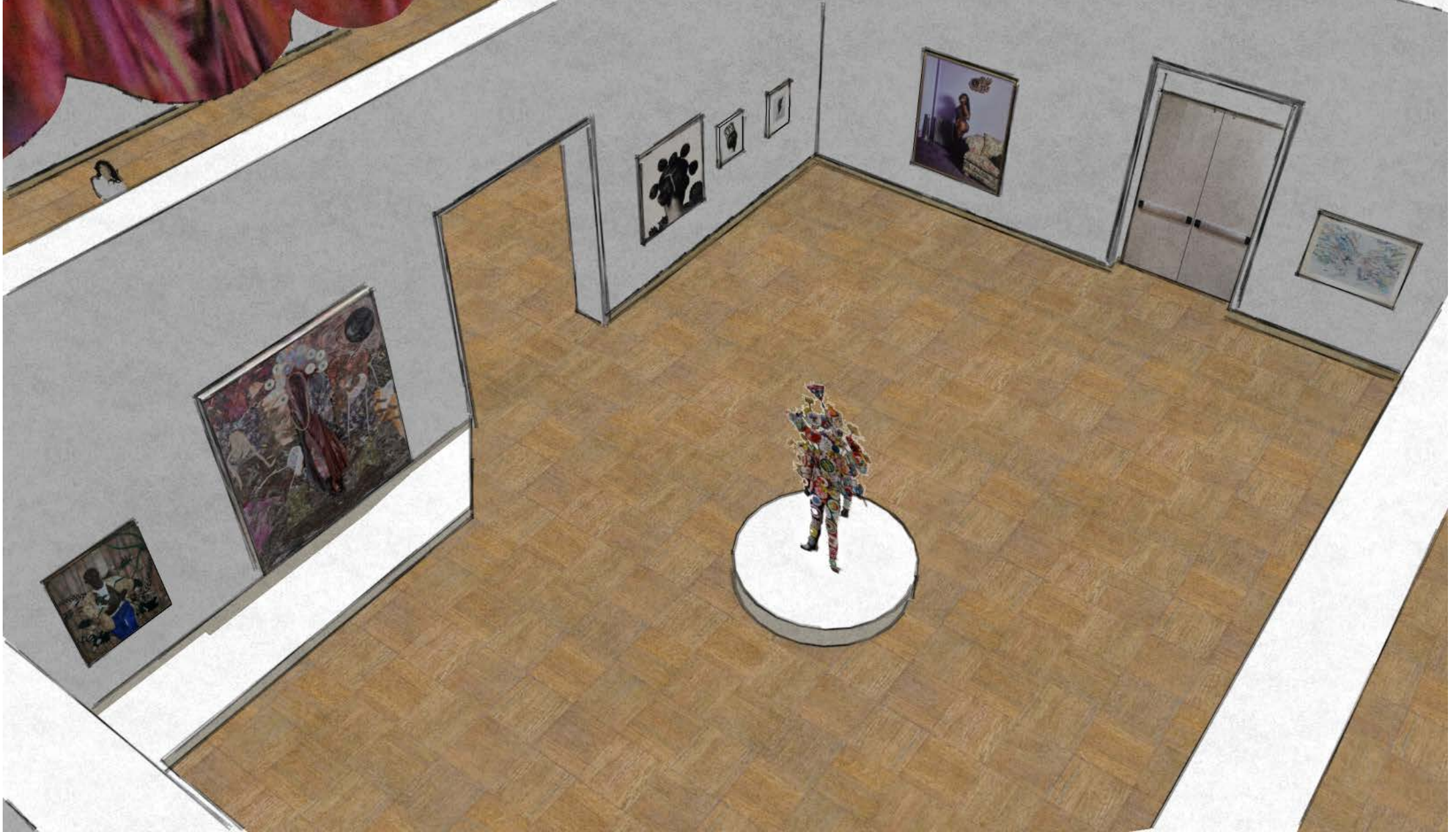
Charles Gaines
"Faces: Men and Women, #14 "Charles Hanzlicek", 1978
Ink on paper, photography

"I believe good work undermines categories, and its test (and its death) is its success. Aesthetic issues are by contrast very dull. Arguments over value and taste are dull. Confrontations are exciting."

-Charles Gaines, 1981



Gallery G374



Gallery G374 (draft, some objects in gallery will be different)